

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING JONATHAN M. NELSON FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Jonathan M. Nelson, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 288, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Jonathan has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Jonathan has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Jonathan M. Nelson for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

A NEW GUN ARGUMENT—MAYORS TURN THE POLITICAL ISSUE TO SAVING LIVES

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg for taking the initiative of bringing the issue of gun violence to the forefront. This is truly an important topic for discussion. Mayor Bloomberg is aware of the many problems caused by gun violence and he knows first hand the commitment needed to adequately address it.

Mayor Bloomberg knows just how serious this issue has become in major cities across America. As a result, just this past week, he called for a conference in New York City of a few big city mayors in what was labeled "national leadership in the war on gun violence". Gun violence in many of our nation's cities is on the rise, and will continue to be if no serious action is taken. Mayor Bloomberg feels that since neither the White House nor Congress has taken any real steps toward addressing the issue, it must fall to state and local governments to handle.

I want to stress the fact that this responsibility should not fall solely on state and local governments, but equally on us in the Congress. Congress needs to see what can be done to assist those in our home districts dealing with gun violence. Have we forgotten about them? We should be able to provide our cities with any type of assistance that they need, especially on an issue so vital.

Congress needs to reinstate the assault weapons ban act of 1994 which sadly expired in September of 2004. Allowing this law to expire does not show our resolve on gun trafficking and I believe that it renders us irrelevant. Mayor Bloomberg is a Republican and has teamed up with Democratic mayors in particular Mayor Menino of Boston and has in essence left the partisanship at the door for the sake of the people they were elected to serve.

Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston have made the case that this is in no way an attack on the culture of hunting, a sport practiced by many in this country. However, they realize that "it's a difference in how guns are used". In rural areas, guns are used for collection and hunting, but in inner cities, guns are "used almost entirely to threatened or kill other human beings".

I enter into the RECORD the opinion editorial by E.J. Dionne, Jr. published by the Washington Post for the new insight it presented and acknowledgment of various big city mayors for the efforts to control guns. The mayors are leading the way toward stronger gun control and we must find ways to support this growing movement.

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 28, 2006]

A NEW GUN ARGUMENT—MAYORS TURN THE POLITICAL ISSUE TO SAVING LIVES

(By E.J. Dionne, Jr.)

NEW YORK.—Have you noticed that Washington politicians have given up on thinking about new solutions to gun violence? New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg has noticed, and he's angry. Good for him.

Bloomberg is a Republican, if hardly a partisan sort, and it may take a Republican to restart a debate that many Democrats have fled after a careful examination of the electoral map—and years of exhaustion from demagoguery on the issue.

Teaming up with Boston's Democratic mayor, Thomas Menino, Bloomberg brought 13 other big-city mayors together here on Tuesday to call for "national leadership in the war on gun violence."

"If the leadership won't come from Congress or come from the White House, then it has to come from us," said Bloomberg.

The mayors, Menino said, do not want to meddle with the rights of hunters. They are concerned about the trafficking of illegal guns and the powerlessness of individual cities to enforce their own weapons laws because of loopholes in federal rules and because criminals can easily obtain weapons in jurisdictions with looser regulations.

Our dysfunctional political system has become especially dysfunctional on gun violence. The National Rifle Association regularly says that we don't need new laws and should simply enforce the regulations on the books. But if many of the existing laws are unenforceable, that statement is meaningless.

Opponents of even modest gun regulation win the upper hand rhetorically by invoking two words: freedom and elitism. None of us is really free, the argument goes, unless all of us have essentially unfettered access to

weapons, and any new gun laws are seen as leading down a slippery slope to a total ban on gun ownership. Supporters of gun regulations are always cast as metropolitan high-brows lacking in respect for the way of life of law-abiding country folks.

At a structural level, Congress has a deep bias in favor of the rural point of view because the Senate is stacked in favor of rural states. Idaho, Wyoming and Montana have two senators each, and so do California, New York and Illinois.

According to the latest Census Bureau estimates, the six senators from those three rural states represent 2,874,060 people. The six from the three states that include big urban and suburban populations represent 68,150,148 people. By these figures, you might calculate the rough odds against gun regulations at 24 to 1.

Changing the political argument is easier than changing the Senate. Mayors—joined soon, Menino hopes, by suburban county executives—are the right people to start the work.

Yes, there is a cultural difference between big cities and rural areas, but it's a difference in how guns are used. Rural people treasure their guns mostly for hunting and recreation, and as collectors. In inner cities, guns—especially handguns—are used almost entirely to threaten or kill other human beings.

"There are neighborhoods where if you say 'duck,' people get out of the way because they're worried they'll be shot," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said in an interview. "But there are other parts of the country where if you say 'duck,' people will grab their rifles to go duck hunting."

We desperately need a new politics of gun regulation in which law-abiding gun owners see the fight for tougher laws not as a form of disrespect for their culture but as an acknowledgment that if our gun rules are an unenforceable hodgepodge, illegal guns will inevitably get into the hands of kids and criminals in the cities and suburbs.

"I'm fighting for freedom, too," said Barrett. "I'm fighting for the freedom of a grandma to sit on her front porch and not get hit when there's a drive-by shooting. I'm fighting for the freedom of kids to play in the park without being caught in a cross-fire."

The mayors have to act for another reason: Democrats have lost their nerve on the gun issue. Barrett traces this to the passage of the assault weapons ban in 1994. (Congress let it expire in September 2004.) Many Democrats who supported the ban were defeated in that fall's election.

"So Democrats who might be inclined to do something are now inclined to stay away from the issue," said Barrett, a Democratic member of Congress at the time. "And most Republicans aren't inclined to do anything at all."

Railing against this state of affairs is useless. Better that a savvy group of mayors takes the lead in the difficult struggle to change the underlying politics by reminding Americans that this issue is about saving the lives of innocent kids—and of grandmas in their rocking chairs.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.